

"Fanning" With Rev. "Billy" Sunday

An Interview on Old Time Baseball With the Famous Former Star



Rev. Wm. Sunday.
As an Evangelist today.

ALTHOUGH since "Billy" Sunday quit chasing

baseball flies to chase the devil he has been tremendously busy preaching the gospel and saving the souls of tens of thousands of men and women, he is still a thoroughbred "fan," and there isn't a devotee of the great national game anywhere who keeps in closer touch with it than he. Of course, there are days when this "former-great" ball player hasn't time to "fan," but one day of every seven is a rest day with him, and on that day he's always ready for the man who wants to talk the game.

He gave me the glad hand the other day at Marshalltown, where he was engaged in a great revival meeting. I came to ask him to write a story of old-time baseball, but he excused himself because he was too busy and too tired to undertake such a task. However, he declared that he would like nothing better than to talk about the olden days and let me put down his reminiscences for him.

With due appreciation for the talent of today Sunday is of the opinion that the "has-beens" were equally as great in their day. Modesty would naturally cause him to eliminate himself from any of the comparisons, but in speaking of the old days, Sunday said:

"The individual ball player of today is no better than he was twenty or twenty-five years ago. In fact I believe that, taking everything into consideration, the fellows of a quarter of a century ago excelled in some ways. To be true what a man does nowadays counts for more in a game, for now they have team work down to perfection. In the old days we hardly knew what 'team work,' as the word applies today, was. We knew nothing about a hit and run game or the double steal—that was all unknown dope to us. Consequently, playing more as individuals, more rested on us as individuals. Hence my reason for saying that, perhaps in some ways, the boys of the old days excelled the stars of today."

Learned the Game in Cow Lot.

A LITTLE history of "Billy" Sunday's adoption of a baseball career will be interesting to the older fans who remember well the old days of Anson, and Clarkson, and the immortal Kelly. Professional baseball with "Billy" Sunday was more of an accident than otherwise, and his career may be attributed solely to "Cap" Anson, who "found" him.

In the early '80s "Billy" Sunday was brought to Marshalltown by managers of a volunteer hose team. In those days firemen's tournaments were among the big events of the year, and commanded wide interest. Sunday was then a youth, living at Nevada, Iowa, the county seat of Story, his native county. Sunday was fleet of foot, and the hose team managers were looking for just his kind. They secured a job for him in Marshalltown, in order to get him on the team. Sunday was then running easily in :10½, naturally he was a valuable man.

Incidentally Sunday liked to play ball, and he was out in the pasture for practice regularly. He began to command attention in this line, not so much for his proficiency in the game, as his fleetness of foot and his great base running. He was a wonder for his day, and it was practically a cinch when he got a base that with any kind of luck at

By Rodney Clarke Wells

all he would "tally," as the fans then said it. So Sunday made his debut with the Marshalltown team—a strong amateur bunch for those days. Marshalltown in 1882 had beaten everything it had played with the exception of the team of the Capital City, and that it had not played. Likewise Des Moines had won all its games, and the result was a contest for the championship of Iowa. Sunday played left field in the game, which was pulled off in Des Moines. Marshalltown won, 14 to 9. The young man Sunday so distinguished himself, by making several hits and scores, that "Pop" Anson's attention was called to him when Anson came out to Marshalltown the next winter to visit his father. Anson looked Sunday up, and made him a proposition. The result was that Sunday went to Chicago in the spring of 1883 for a "work-out."

Made Pfeffer Look Like An Ice Wagon.

"THE first thing they ran me up against in Chicago," said Sunday, in recalling old days, "was Fred Pfeffer, the crack second baseman of the then celebrated White Stockings. Pfeffer was the fastest man on bases in Chicago, and one of the fastest in the league. Anson had told some of the boys about my running, and they were inclined to doubt the old man's word. It didn't take long to settle matters, however, and the first thing I knew I was matched with Pfeffer for a foot race. It is needless for me to go into details, but I made Pfeffer look like an ice wagon. I told Pfeffer after we had finished that I had got my practice running with a hose team out at Marshalltown, Iowa."

"Well, I got into the game in short order, and here is where another comparison between the old and modern days of baseball is not amiss. Now a man, to get into the big leagues, ordinarily must have spent years in developing himself in minor leagues. Here I was, for the first time in Chicago, working out in a major league, and just out of the pastures. My speed in running, however, was my big asset, and I was able to get balls other fielders couldn't touch because of being quick on my feet. I was able to run the bases in fourteen seconds, with a standing start, and was timed at that figure time and time again. Naturally this commanded attention not only of the 'big ones' in the league, but of the grand stand and bleachers, and I won a place, even though I wasn't much of a batter and couldn't do much better than hit around .250."

Game Now Greatly Changed.

"BUT the game we played in those days has changed a great deal today. Then we hardly ever had a sub, and it was seldom that a fellow was not in his position. We played season after season with eleven or twelve men, while now it is not uncommon to see as high as thirty men in the big league teams. Why, they carry nearly as many pitchers alone in these modern days as we did in our entire team then."

To illustrate the difference we

worked with two pitchers in the years we won the championship—'Jim' McCormick, who was with Cleveland in the old days, and John Clarkson. These men did not think they were being overworked by pitching one game a week, and perhaps two, but were glad to get out and pitch every other day. They even did more than that, and I'll show you how.

"Detroit couldn't hit Clarkson for sour apples, but they could bat McCormick all over the lot. My, but that Detroit bunch did have a great crowd of sluggers. New York could hit Clarkson, but they couldn't touch McCormick, so 'Pop' always arranged it so that when we played New York, McCormick would pitch three games of the series of four, and Clarkson would do the same when we met Detroit."

Was Great Bunch of Players.

"THAT was a great bunch of players in those days, I'm here to tell you—every mother's son of them. Look back at those New York Giants, and Detroit—yes, and Chicago. And how most of them could use the stick—whew! I tell you they were a fast bunch."

"Take Johnny Clarkson, now out of the game eighteen or twenty years, and today, to my notion, there is not a pitcher in the business who could equal Clarkson in his palmy days."

"Where today can you find a better catcher than old 'Buck' Ewing, of the Giants, or Roger Connor, New York's first baseman, 'Jim' O'Rourke, out in left field, 'Mike' Tiernan, in right, and 'Johnny' Ward, captain of the Giants, who played a great game at short? By the way, Ward is today attorney for the Brooklyn Rapid Transit company. They don't all go to the bad, do they?"

"Then take the Detroit bunch. There was 'Dan' Brothers, at first; Hardy Richardson, in left, and 'Jack' Rowe, at short; 'Deacon' White, on third, and Fred Dunlap, at second. Then there was 'Charley' Bennett, the old catcher, and 'Sam' Thompson in right field—there was a bunch, my boy, any manager could be proud of."

"In our own team there wasn't a one but who was a star in his particular line, if I do say it myself. Where do you find a ball player today who was 'Cap' Anson's equal at all-around ball when Anson was at his best? And where can you find a catcher who would beat old Mike Kelly?"

"Cy" Young Last of Old School.

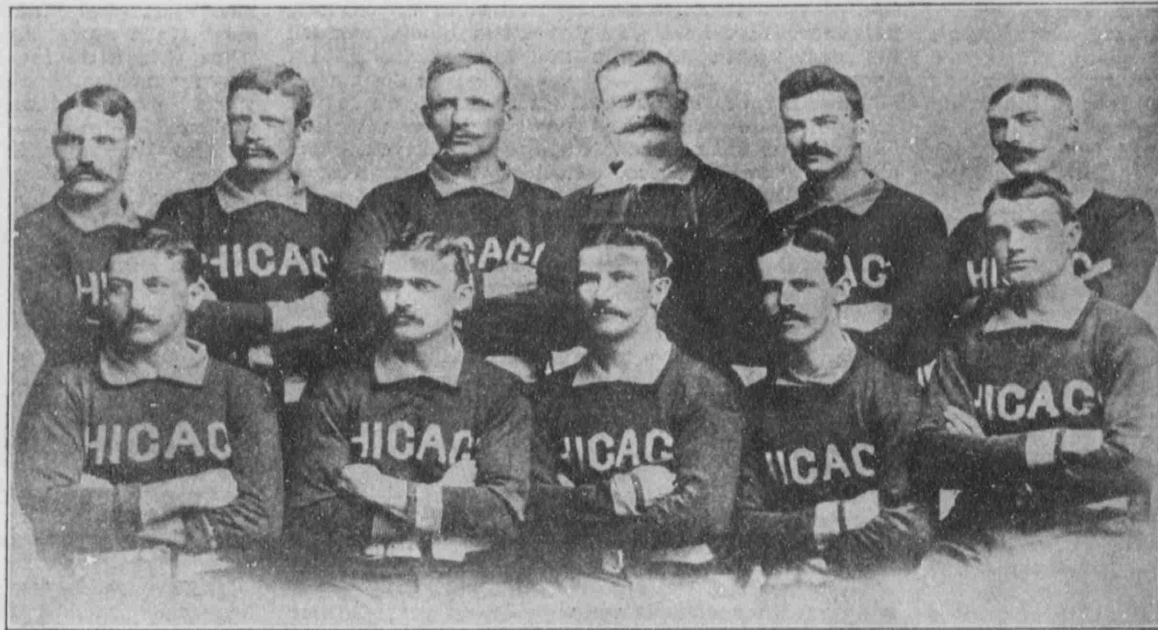
"THE only man playing professional ball today who was playing when I was in the game is old 'Cy' Young, of the Cleveland. 'Cy' had a counterpart in 'Jimmie' Galvin, who pitched in the old days of Buffalo and Pittsburg. And 'Jim' was just as speedy when he had been pitching for fifteen years as he was when he began. I remember well how he looked in the box. He had a half hitch in his delivery that the umpires of today would term a balk, and he could hold a man on first base tighter than any man I ever tried to steal a base on. It makes no difference how fast a base runner is on his feet, if he doesn't get a start with the swing of the pitcher he is going to get caught at second surer than shootin'."

"While I consider 'Johnny' Kling perhaps

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"Billy" Sunday
As a star ball player in the '80s.



THE OLD CHICAGO WHITE SOX, CHAMPIONS OF 1880, '81, '82 AND '85.

Top Row—Geo. F. Gore, center field; Frank S. Flint, catcher; A. C. Anson, captain and first base; Jas. H. McCormick, pitcher; M. J. Kelly, right fielder and catcher; Fred H. Pfeffer, second base.
Bottom Row—Edward N. Williamson, third base; A. Dalrymple, left field; Thos. E. Burns, short stop; John G. Clarkson, pitcher; W. A. Sunday, right field.